DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 971 FL 018 963

AUTHOR	Gebhard, Jerry G.
TITLE	The Supervision of Second and Foreign Language Teachers. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-FL-90-06
PUB DATE	Nov 90
CONTRACT	RI88062010
NOTE	3p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Language Teachers; Learning Activities; *Second Language Instruction; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Supervision; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

Language teacher supervisors see their role as: (1) training teachers to go from their actual to ideal teaching behaviors; (2) providing a means for teachers to reflect on and work through problems in their teaching; (3) furnishing opportunities for teachers to explore new teaching possibilities; and (4) providing teachers with opportunities to acquire knowledge about teaching and to develop their own theory of teaching. It is important for supervisors to realize that the goal of supervision--improvement of instruction--is problematic because of the complex relationship between teaching and learning. The focus of training is on specific outcomes that can be achieved through a sequence of steps, commonly within a specified period of time. Some aspects of teaching are not easily mastered. A variety of activities focus on teacher development. These activities, incorporated into the supervisory process, provide opportunities for teachers to become more informed and capable of making their own decisions about improving their teaching. In most contexts, the creative supervisor, equipped with instruments to train and methods that offer teachers a chance to develop, can encourage teachers to learn and to build a more complex theory of teaching. (VWL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED324971

ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics
Center for Applied Linguistics

ERIC Digest

The Supervision of Second and Foreign Language Teachers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Prepared by Jerry G. Gebhard
Janus Pannonius University, Hungary

November 1990
EDO-FL-90-06

This *Digest* is a joint publication of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics and the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL), 1600 Cameron Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, U.S.A. (703) 836-0774.

Teacher Supervision Defined

At a fundamental level, language teacher supervision is an ongoing process of teacher education in which the supervisor observes what goes on in the teacher's classroom with an eye toward the goal of improved instruction. The traditional role of supervisors within this process has been:

- to prescribe the best way to teach and to model teaching;
- to direct or guide the teacher's teaching; and
- to evaluate progress.

Recently, however, supervisors have modified their role. They now see the following as their primary responsibilities:

- to train new teachers to go from their actual to ideal teaching behavior;
- to provide the means for teachers to reflect on and work through problems in their teaching;
- to furnish opportunities for teachers to explore new teaching possibilities; and
- to afford teachers chances to acquire knowledge about teaching and to develop their own theory of teaching.

The Problematic Goal of Language Teacher Supervision

It is important for supervisors to realize that the goal of supervision--improvement of instruction--is problematic because of the complex relationship between teaching and learning. In short, not enough is known about how teaching behaviors result in student learning to define or measure instructional improvement in all teaching settings. This lack of a clear definition has led some teacher educators to question how the improvement of instruction can be considered the goal of teacher supervision.

Other teacher educators point out that improvement can be perceived in more than one way. Rather than basing the concept of improvement on the relationship between teaching behavior and learning outcome, improvement can be assessed by comparing what teachers are expected to be doing in a specific teaching context with what they actually do. As Gaies and Bowers (1990) put it, "the supervisory process has as its goal helping teachers reduce the discrepancy between actual teaching behavior and ideal teaching behavior" (p. 169). For example, if a teacher has been doing 98% of the talking in the class, a reduction to 75% would show improvement. Realization of improved instruction requires that supervisors provide both training and opportunities for personal and professional development (Freeman, 1989; Richards, 1990).

Supervision as Teacher Training

As Freeman points out, the focus of training is on "specific outcomes that can be achieved through a clear sequence of steps, commonly within a specified period of time. The aspects of teaching that are seen as trainable are discrete chunks, usually based on knowledge or skills, that can be isolated, practiced, and ultimately mastered" (1989, p.39). Teachers can be trained to manipulate a variety of teaching behaviors, such as wait time, questioning behaviors, use of classroom space, behaviors that keep students on task, and amount of teacher talk.

Observation. When the focus is on training, the supervisory process usually begins with a pre-observation conference to determine which aspects of the teacher's behavior call for attention. Next, the supervisor observes the interaction in the teacher's classroom, focusing on the predetermined areas of teaching, sometimes using an observation instrument. The supervisor and teacher then meet for a post-observation conference to discuss the class, using the supervisor's observations as the center of discussion. This process then cycles back to decisions about which areas of teaching will be addressed next.

Observation Instruments. Used for training purposes, these instruments aim at description and take the form of one of the following: 1) check lists of behaviors from which the observed behaviors of teachers are checked off by the supervisor; (2) sign systems that are used to record the number of occurrences of particular behaviors within a set period of time; or (3) category systems from which observed behaviors are coded.

FL018963

Sometimes supervisors use rating scales to evaluate the teacher's performance--excellent, good, poor--on a list of behaviors. However, such judgmental instruments are not usually recommended for training purposes.

Good and Brophy (1987) (reported in Day, 1990) discuss and show a variety of observation instruments for use outside the field of second/foreign language teaching but also appropriate for observation of language teaching. Nunan (1990) and Malamah-Thomas (1987) discuss and show instruments used specifically by language teachers and supervisors. Moskowitz (1971) illustrates the use of the sign system, while Allen, Frohlich, and Spada (1984) and Fanselow (1987) provide category systems.

Supervision and Teacher Development

Richards (1990) points out that some aspects of teaching are not easily mastered. For example, effective classroom management can not be taught and practiced as a discrete component because it includes the complex ways in which student behavior, space, and task are organized and controlled by the teacher in order to accomplish teaching. In short, there can be no specific, direct training for effectively handling complex aspects of teaching such as classroom management, motivation, the structuring of tasks, the pacing of lessons, or the grouping of learners. Instead, teachers need to develop these qualities through time and experience, and supervisors can contribute to this development.

A variety of activities focus on teacher development. Fanselow (1987, 1990), for example, discusses how teachers can construct their own knowledge about teaching and generate their own alternative teaching behaviors through a process of exploration of classroom behaviors and their consequences. Other activities that are adaptable to teacher supervision are found in Richards and Nunan (1990). They include action research (Nunan) and professional development activities (Ellis, Lange, Pennington), as well as a way for teachers to understand role relationships (Wright), and to gain knowledge through self-observation (Bartlett; Bailey; Porter et al.). Such activities, incorporated into the supervisory process, provide opportunities for teachers to become more informed and more capable of making their own decisions about improving their teaching.

Finally, Gebhard, Gaitan, and Oprandy (1990) point out that teacher development extends beyond the supervisor-teacher dyad. They suggest that teachers can master a variety of teaching behaviors as well as make more informed teaching decisions if they have chances to process their teaching through multiple activities, including, but not limited to, the supervisor-teacher dyad. Such activities might include discussing teaching in seminars, doing investigative projects, writing journals, observing other teachers' teaching, and reading about teaching.

Supervision and Teachers' Experience: An Important Consideration

There is a big difference in the needs of teachers across supervisory contexts. While some experienced language teachers might benefit from teacher development activities, beginning teachers might benefit more from training: for example, learning how to wait after asking questions, or giving clear directions. In short, the teacher's prior experience determines what an acceptable approach to supervision ought to be. In most contexts, though, the creative supervisor, equipped with instruments to train and methods that offer teachers a chance to develop, can stretch the imaginations of teachers to go beyond their present knowledge and to build a more complex theory of teaching.

References

Allen, P., Frohlich, M., & Spada, N. (1984). The communicative orientation of language teaching: An observation scheme. In J. Handscombe, R.A. Orem, & B.P. Taylor (Eds.), *On Tesol '83: The question of control*. Washington, DC: TESOL.

Day, R.R. (1990). Teacher observation in second language teacher education. In J.C. Richards, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp43-61). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fanselow, J.F. (1987). *Breaking rules: Generating and exploring alternatives in the language classroom*. New York: Longman.

Fanselow, J.F. (1990). Let's see: Contrasting conversations about teaching. In J.C. Richards, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp182-97). New York: Cambridge University Press. (Reprinted from *TESOL Quarterly, 22*(1), 1988, pp113-20.)

Freeman, D. (1989). Teacher training, development, and decision making: A model of teaching and related strategies for language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly 23*(1), pp27-46.

Gaies, S., & Bowers, R. (1990). Clinical supervision of language teaching: The supervisor as trainer and educator. In J.C. Richards, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp167-81). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gebhard, J.G., Gaitan, S., & Oprandy, R. (1990). Beyond prescription: The student-teacher as investigator. In J.C. Richards, &D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp.167-81). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Good, T.L., & Brophy, J.E. (1987). *Looking into classrooms*. New York: Harper & Row.

Malameh-Thomas, A. (1987). *Classroom interaction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Moskowitz, G. (1971). Interaction analysis: A modern language for supervisors. *Foreign Language Annals, 5*(2), pp211-21.

Nunan, D. (1990). Action research in the language classroom. In J.C. Richards, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp62-81). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J.C. (1990). The dilemma of teacher education in TESOL. In J.C. Richards, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp3-15). New York: Cambridge University Press. (Reprinted from *TESOL Quarterly, 21*(2), 1987. pp209-26.)

Richards, J.C., & Nunan, D. (Eds.). (1990). *Second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

For Further Reading

Abbott, S.,& Carter, R.M. (1985). Clinical supervision and the foreign language teacher. *Foreign Language Annals, 18*(1), 25-29.

Allwright, D. (1988). *Observation in the language classroom*. New York: Longman.

Gebhard, J.G. (1990). Models of supervision: Choices. In J.C. Richards, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp16-25). New York: Cambridge University Press. (Reprinted from *TESOL Quarterly, 18*(1), 1984, pp501-514.)

Goldhammer, R., Anderson, R.H., & Krajewski, J. (1980). *Clinical supervision*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Knopp, C.K. (1980). The supervision of foreign language teachers. In F.M. Grittner (Ed.), *Learning a second language: Seventy-ninth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II* (pp.186-207). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sergiovanni, T.J., & Starratt, R.J. (1979). *Supervision: Human perspectives*. New: McGraw Hill.

This report was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract number RI88062010. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.

Appendix 16

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

Office of Education
Research and
Improvement (OERI)

ERIC

Date Filmed

March 29, 1991